

A vast majority of governments throughout the world, including the United States, continue to deny full civil rights and protections to their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) citizens. However, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009 that has been introduced in the Parliament of Uganda takes this to a deadly extreme. This proposed legislation criminalizes and punishes homosexuality, thereby endangering the lives of all Ugandans and threatening their civil and human rights. This is outrageously discriminatory and deeply troubling.

If it became law, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill would condemn HIV-positive citizens who engage in consensual homosexual acts to death. It would also sentence those who engage in consensual homosexual acts to life imprisonment. LGBT citizens living abroad could be extradited for acts committed outside Uganda and tried under this law, including those who are also dual citizens of Uganda and the United States. If you knew that a homosexual act had been committed either in Uganda or by a Ugandan citizen, this would have to be reported to the authorities within 24 hours – failure to do so could result in a jail term of up to three years, even if you are not a Ugandan citizen. Finally, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill requires that it takes precedence over any commitment to international agreements that recognize the rights of LGBT persons. As a responsible member of the international community, the United States cannot sit idly by as such a bill becomes law.

This legislation would undermine the government of Uganda's commitment to democracy at a most basic level, significantly damage its relations with the international community, and risk inciting greater hate-motivated violence within Uganda itself. Furthermore, I am deeply concerned about the consequences that this bill would have on public health in Uganda as it attempts to combat HIV/AIDS. The stigmatization of homosexual identity and behavior continues to stymie efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in the United States and abroad. The bill's criminalization of homosexuality will undoubtedly discourage individuals from having the open and honest discussions about their sexual health and behavior that are crucial to lessening the spread and burden of this infection.

I commend President Obama and State Secretary Clinton for denouncing this bigoted legislation and am further encouraged by Secretary Clinton's commitment to protect "the rights of the LGBT community worldwide". It is my fervent hope that Congress will show a similar commitment to its own LGBT citizens when it is called upon to repeal discriminatory legislation such as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the *Defense of Marriage Act*.

I unequivocally condemn the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in the strongest possible terms and urge the government of Uganda to withdraw this bill and support the inalienable human rights of all people.

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